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"On the Idol Human Head of the Jivaro Indians of Ecuador...

TRANSLATION

To the Secretary of the Spanish Legation, Quito.

Ecuador, Macas, 2nd Dec. 1860.

Sir, ---I received your letter of the 15th of August, in which you request information about the idol head of the Jívaros; how I obtained it, and how it had been prepared by them. What I now communicate to you, is the result of more than two years research.

A Jívaro of the Tambos tribe was baptized, when he undertook the commission to procure one of these idols; however, the first year he was unsuccessful. The following year he put the following plan into execution. He made a Jívaro believe that his idol wished to travel a little, for being in a sort of imprisonment, it would do nothing for its owner, suggesting that the idol should be handed over to him so as to make a trial. The baptized Indian brought it to me, returning with many presents to the owner, who then went on a hunting expedition, which turned out well. The fame of such success may facilitate the journeying of more of these idols.

After a war, the victors cut off the heads of their victims [the skull and its contents of course being removed--W.B.], a stone heated by fire is introduced into the skin of the head, desiccation goes on, and it is reduced to a miniature size, without its loss of the features. This is how I understood the matter; however, I may not have well understood the process.

When the head is prepared, the tundui or war drum is sounded; this calls the tribe together for the feast of triumph, which has to be celebrated before nine days have passed since the fight, otherwise the spirits of those (of their party) who had fallen would not be satisfied, neither could the head be deified. On the tenth day the feast begins; the Jívaro who has an idol head suspends it with those of others on an upright pole in the centre of a habitation, the idol head of the feast having a prominent position. The invited are dressed in all their finery, the females especially. They seat themselves far or near from the idols according to their rank in the tribe. [113]

When they have feasted, the priest takes the head of the victim, and holding it up by a string, makes a long speech, eulogizing the feats of arms the owner of the head had done in his lifetime, the valour he showed at his death, the fame of his ancestors, that it was worthy of adoration, etc., etc., concluding with certain gesticulations. After a brief silence the priest utters a piercing cry, when all rise on their feet, making a loud noise.

The head is again tied to the pole, when they all take their seats, excepting the victor; he remains near the head armed with a lance, and abuses the head roundly, to which the head is made to reply in similar terms, the anger increasing on both sides to its utmost extent; the priest being the spokesman for the head or chancha, who concludes

his part shouting in the name of the head, 'Coward! when I was in life thou didst not dare to insult me thus, thou didst tremble at the sound of my name, coward! Some brother of mine will revenge me.' The Jívaro has been unable to support this speech against his bravery, and raising his lance he strikes and wounds the head of his enemy in the face; after which he sews the mouth up, and thus condemns his idol to eternal silence. From this moment the idol is speechless, excepting as an oracle, questions being put to it when the inquirer is under the spell of some strong narcotic.

Now commences the dance. The victor suspends the idol (on a pole) in the open air, and the female he most esteems follows him to perform this act. This is the greatest honour that can be conferred on a Jivaro. She holds on to the waist of the victor, all the men joining in a similar manner, forming a chain. The women dance apart. Each plays upon some musical instrument or other, wildly singing the song of triumph. They go on dancing round the interior of the habitation, with short intermissions, for two, three, or more days.

The Jívaro who may have given the victim the second wound, after a year of severe fasting, repeats the scenes of the first feast (excepting the first part of the ceremony); and if three or more have assisted, they have successively their feasts.

It sometimes happens that, being hard pressed by the enemy, they have not the time or opportunity to cut off the head of a fallen foe; in this case, the ceremony is performed upon the head of a sow, which is adored as if it were an idol head.

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When the fruits of the earth are not abundant, and their stock of domestic animals does not rapidly increase, the women commence the feast of supplication, in which they alone dance, holding on by each other, the old priest or capito carrying the idol. If the head does not work a miracle, the hair is shaved off, and the head thrown into the woods.

The preceding is what has appeared to me the most interesting [114] of the savage customs of the infidels inhabiting our eastern Cordilleras. I may, however, add that, of those they kill in battle, they do not make idols of all, but only of such who have shown themselves most brave; from these they tear out the heart, and the extracted brains they eat. This custom is common among the tribes of the Tumbas, Mendes, Pastaza, Jurumbaini, Tutamagosa, Chiguavida, Achmiles, Guambinima, Guambisa, Huamboga, etc., as well as the inhabitants lower down; also by those on the Morona, with this difference, that those of the Morona are really cannibals.

(Signed) José Felix Barriero.
General Secretariat of the Provincial Government,
Quito, 2nd January, 1861.

The above signature and rubric are those of the present political chief of Macas.

(Signed) R. de Anambi.

Spanish Legation to Ecuador.

The above signature and rubric are authentic, and as used by the Secretary-General of the Government of Ecuador.

The Chargé d' Affairs of H. M. C. M.

(Signed) C. de Sanquericio y Ayua.

The preceding has been translated by the undersigned.

Wm. Bollaert.

London, January 15th, 1862.

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Jívaro

"In June 1861, Professor Cassola, on his way from Ecuador to Italy, showed me in London, in all probability, the first specimen from the Jívaro country of the peculiarly reduced cutis of the idol head. It was reduced to about one-fourth the natural size, preserving somewhat of the features. All the bone had been removed, only the skin and hair remaining. Of this head Professor Cassola told me, that a party exploring the river Pastasa observed it in a small temple, and at night stole it. It was supposed to be the head of a hostile chief, and was worn in battle as a charm.

A string was attached to the top of the head, so that it could be worn round the neck. Another string was passed through perforations in the lips, and hanging down. The ears had been pierced, and the nostrils were in one and filled with black resin. Professor Owen thought it had been reduced by tanning the skin. It struck me that it might have been shrunk and dried over a fire, on a mould of clay."

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"Some Observations on the Jívaros (Jébero, Jívira), from Antiquarian, Ethnological, and other Researches in New Granada, Ecuador, Peru, and Chile, etc. By W. Bollaert. pp. 96. Translated from Villavicencio's Geografia del Ecuador. London: Trübner.

This great nation is found between the rivers Chinchipe and Pastasa; it is composed of numerous and large tribes, taking the names of the rivers on which they live, as Moronas, Pautes, Zamoras, Gualaquisas, Upanos, Pindos, Pastassas, Agapicos, Achuales, Cotapassas, etc. All these speak the Jívaro language, which is clear, energetic, and harmonious, and easy to learn. The Incas of Peru tried in vain to conquer them; the Spaniards succeeded in reducing them, founding cities in their country; but a rising on one day in 1599 destroyed the work of many years. Since then some attempts have been made to subdue them, but without success. They are active and muscular, have black eyes, small, and very animated; they show a bold front, are bent nosed, thin lipped, and have teeth as white as ivory. Many of them are whitish and bearded; it is believed this whiteness comes from the Spanish women they stole when they rebelled in 1599. They use the lance with great dexterity, and manage the shield well.

Although the Jívaros are of so unbending a character, some of the tribes approach the conquered settlements, entering into relations with them, as has occurred in

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Canelos, with some of the Jívaros of the Pastassa, and they have even learnt the Quitu language. Other tribes have crossed the Cordillera, and have entered the towns, seeking peace and trade, inviting them to open roads.

Mr. Markham, in Expeditions into the Valley of the Amazons, p.166, Hakluyt Soc., 1859, states that the Jívaros take a strong emetic every morning in the shape of an infusion of the leaves of the guayusa (sometimes called the tea-plant), for the sake of getting rid of all undigested food, going to the chase with an empty stomach.

In 1855, some Jívaros are reported to have destroyed the ancient town of San Borja, and the villages of Santa Teresa and Santiago. See Samuel Fritz's Map, 1707. Velasco, Historia de Quito, iii, p.152; Villavicencio; and Heraldo de Lima, 1855."

"Conspiracy of the Jívaros. From Velasco's Historia de Quito, iii, p.152, etc. Translated by W.B.

In 1599, the same year the Araucanos rose in Chile against the Spaniards, the Jívaros of Quito did the same. The cause of the terrible revolt is mainly attributed to the avarice of the Governor of Macas, who issued an order that a donation should be given by Indians as well as Spaniards, so as to celebrate with due pomp the coronation feasts of Philip III of Spain. This order was resisted by both Spaniards and Indians; the former, however, resolving to defray the expenses of the feasts themselves, though it should cost more than the donation. The governor now privately informed the Spaniards that he only expected each to give according to his means; but this was not explained, or perhaps not intimated, to the Indians.

The Macas and Huamboyas submitted to the order; but the Jívaros would not, and were about resolving to shake themselves off from the Spaniards and retire to the banks of the river Morona. But Quirruba, one of their chiefs, told them such was not the way to rid themselves of the yoke of the Christians; rather to remain for the present, and that he would lay plans before them for revenge. He advised first that great secrecy was absolutely necessary; and secondly to collect even more gold than was required by the governor's order.

Quirruba got all the Jívaros of the Morona to join in the conspiracy; the Macas and Huamboyas promising to assist in the massacre of all the Spaniards in that region on a

certain day and hour. Quirruba was to go with a sufficient force to Logroño (where the said governor would be), and other two chiefs were to enter, one Sevilla del Oro, the other Huamboya, putting all to fire and sword.

Twenty thousand Indians under Quirruba surrounded Logroño at midnight; a portion took possession of the various barracks, so that the Spanish soldiers should have no opportunity of assisting the inhabitants. Quirruba marched upon the governor's house, taking with him the gold the Indians had collected for the coronation gift. The massacre of the Spaniards now commenced, and the governor was soon made prisoner, when he was tauntingly told the moment had arrived to give him the gold they had collected. He was stripped, his hands and feet tied, and, whilst some of the Indians were upbraiding him, others were melting the gold in crucibles. They opened the governor's mouth with a bone, saying they would now see if he could be satisfied for once with gold. They now poured the melted metal down his throat until his bowels burst within him, when they raised their shout of exultation. This act having been perpetrated, the morn began [117] to dawn, when by this time every Spaniard had been killed--men, old women, and children; the younger females being reserved as their prize.

Before midday the Indians learnt that the capital, Sevilla del Oro, had not been attacked by the Macas, who failed them. Quirruba now sent a large force to attack Sevilla, distant twenty-five leagues. The conspiracy was only discovered there on the

morning of the fatal day at Logroño. The Macas, fearful of success, or that they did not dislike the Spaniards as the Jívaros did, failed to cooperate; but they did not reveal the sanguinary plans, and those distant from the capital retired to the forests before the arrival of the fatal day.

It however transpired that the Jívaros Moronas intended to destroy Sevilla and other places on a certain night (that night). About nightfall a portion of the inhabitants of Huamboya (sixteen leagues distant) arrived at Sevilla, the others having gone towards Riobambo.

When the Jívaros were seen marching upon Sevilla del Oro, the Spaniards went out to meet them. Terrible conflicts and slaughter ensued on both sides; when the Spaniards had to retreat to the city, having expended all their ammunition. They were followed by the Indians, who set as much of the city on fire as they could, and at night they retired. It was never known what had been done in Mendoza, for neither Spaniard nor Indian was found there. In Logroño, it is said, there perished of the Spaniards 12,000. Sevilla had 25,000 inhabitants; one quarter of these were saved, principally women and children, but very few men. The Jívaros nearly destroyed the neighbouring districts of Yaguarzongo and Jaen, Loja and Quijos, and even to Popayan this conspiracy extended.

Realde, the President of the Audiencia of Quito, sent an armed force into the Indian

country, as did the Viceroy of Peru, Velasco. An armed expedition under the governor went to Logroño, where they only found heaps of ashes and unburied bodies. The Spaniards went in search of the Jívaros as far as the river Paute, the general rendezvous of these Indians, but arriving there they only met with the ashes of their temporary dwellings; some of the Jívaros having retired into the eastern Cordillera of the Yaguarzongo, the other into the almost impenetrable forests of the Paute.

The Spanish government gave up the idea of being able to punish the Indians, when a rich private individual of Cuenca undertook it. He (his name is not given) went with canoes, barcas, and rafts to Logroño, where he built a fort, in case of a retreat of his forces. He remained there in command, whilst his force descended the river. The Jívaros lay in ambush, and de-[118]stroyed the whole of the expedition. After six months, those in the fort at Logroño heard of the extermination of their companions, when they returned back to Cuenca. The same individual went with another expedition by the way of Loja, which also failed; and in the end he had to beg for food in the very streets of Cuenca. He applied to the Court of Spain for some recompense, which he did not obtain.

Another expedition was sent from Cuenca by land, when all died excepting four.

The Bishop of Quito then suggested to the Jesuits to go as missionaries amongst the Jívaros; so in 1633 two of the order embarked with some Indians on the Paute, for

Logroño, which was found only after much search; the ruins of the city had been covered with vegetation in the space of thirty-two years. The Jesuits now alone journeyed through the wilderness in search of the Jívaros, when one of them died. The other, after two years wandering, arrived at Jaen, his body full of wounds, and nearly naked."